



I am pleased to present the 2005 EPA Region 8 Progress and Priorities Report. Here, in Region 8 — the Northern Great Plains and Rocky Mountain Region — EPA has been collaborating with state and local governments, tribal nations, communities and nongovernmental organizations to protect public health and the environment for nearly 35 years.

Two hundred years ago, Lewis and Clark and the "Corps of Discovery" passed through the heart of Region 8 on their famous journey up the Missouri River. In the midst of this bicentennial, I often wonder what Lewis and Clark would make of the landscape that we know. Today, as one travels a now-harnessed Missouri to its headwaters, the journey passes by farms and ranches, oil and gas wells, hard rock mines and the occasional city and rural town.

Yet, while much has changed, much would be familiar to Lewis and Clark. The trip northwestward still features expanses of open plains, rolling foothills, free-flowing streams and the rocky peaks of the Continental Divide. Native birds, antelope, wolves and grizzlies still persevere. Tribal communities sustain traditional cultures. The region, in many ways, remains a frontier — a place where human cultures meet and interact with the natural environment.

Today, Region 8's states and tribal lands represent a wildly diverse region:

- In terms of geography — Region 8 encompasses varied and dramatic landscapes including the alpine peaks of the Rockies, the arid canyons and deserts of the Colorado Plateau and the flat farmland of the Eastern Dakotas.
- In terms of built environment — two-thirds of our people live in two major urban areas, Colorado's Front Range and Utah's Wasatch Front, with the remaining one-third spread over vast, rural expanses.
- In terms of governments — EPA works with myriad federal, state, local, county and tribal governments in Region 8, all deeply involved in various environmental protection activities.
- In terms of environmental issues — Region 8 works with a wide spectrum, from managing big city air and water pollution issues and large hazardous waste sites to addressing rural drinking water, livestock feedlot and pesticide problems.

It is this diversity — a diversity of cultures, of economies, of ecosystems — that forms the context in which EPA works to provide clean air, water, and land and protect human and natural communities in Region 8. The following pages provide examples that illustrate how we are working with a variety of tools in diverse communities across the region.

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